

Be Whale Wise

Guidelines for watching
marine
wildlife



Whale Watching:

1. BE CAUTIOUS and COURTEOUS: approach areas of known or suspected marine wildlife activity with extreme caution. Look in all directions before planning your approach or departure.
2. SLOW DOWN: reduce speed to less than 7 knots when within 400 metres/yards of the nearest whale. Avoid abrupt course changes.
3. KEEP CLEAR of the whales' path. If whales are approaching you, cautiously move out of the way.
4. DO NOT APPROACH whales from the front or from behind. Always approach and depart whales from the side, moving in a direction parallel to the direction of the whales.
5. DO NOT APPROACH or position your vessel closer than 100 metres/yards to any whale.
6. If your vessel is not in compliance with the 100 metres/yards approach guideline (#5), place engine in neutral and allow whales to pass.
7. STAY on the OFFSHORE side of the whales when they are traveling close to shore.
8. LIMIT your viewing time to a recommended maximum of 30 minutes. This will minimize the cumulative impact of many vessels and give consideration to other viewers.
9. DO NOT swim with, touch or feed marine wildlife.

Bow and stern-riding porpoises and dolphins:

1. DO NOT drive through groups of porpoises or dolphins to encourage bow or stern-riding.
2. Should dolphins or porpoises choose to ride the bow wave of your vessel, avoid sudden course changes. Hold course and speed or reduce speed gradually.

Seals, sea lions and birds on land:

1. BE CAUTIOUS AND QUIET when around haul-outs and bird colonies, especially during breeding, nesting and pupping seasons (generally May to September).
2. REDUCE SPEED, minimize wake, wash and noise, and then slowly pass without stopping.
3. AVOID approaching closer than 100 metres/yards to any marine mammals or birds.
4. PAY ATTENTION and move away, slowly and cautiously, at the first sign of disturbance or agitation.
5. DO NOT disturb, move, feed or touch any marine wildlife, including seal pups. If you are concerned about a potentially sick or stranded animal, contact your local stranding network where available.

Marine Protected Areas, Wildlife Refuges, Ecological Reserves and Parks:

1. CHECK your nautical charts for the location of various protected areas.
2. ABIDE by posted restrictions or contact a local authority for further information.

To report a marine mammal disturbance or harassment:

CANADA:

Fisheries and Oceans Canada:
1-800-465-4336

US:

NOAA Fisheries, Office for Law Enforcement:
1-800-853-1964

To report marine mammal sightings:

BC Cetacean Sightings Network(BC)
www.wildwhales.org or 1-866-1SAW ONE

The Whale Museum Hotline (WA state):
hotline@whalemuseum.org or 1-800-562-8832

Orca Network (WA state)
info@orcانetwork.org or 1-866-ORCANET

Need more information?

CANADA:

Victoria and Southern Gulf Islands:
Marine Mammal Monitoring Project (M3)
www.salishsea.ca or 250-383-2086

Johnstone Strait and Northern Vancouver Island:
Straitwatch
www.straitwatch.org or 250-974-7064

Robson Bight (Michael Bigg) Ecological Reserve:
www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/eco_reserve/robsonber

Fisheries and Oceans Canada:
www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca

US:

Washington State, Haro Strait Region:
Soundwatch Boater Education Program
www.whalemuseum.org or 360-378-4710

NOAA Fisheries, Northwest Region:
www.nwr.noaa.gov

NOAA Fisheries, Office of Protected Species:
www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/viewing

Whale Watch Operators Association NW:
www.nwwhalewatchers.org

